

Brighton Beach Memoirs – Acting Coming to Life

By far, Brighton Beach Memoirs established itself as the “most relatable, enjoyable” play of KIS theater production history during the two days of spectacular performance. Watching the main character Eugene go through his teenager struggles, the audience couldn’t help laughing out aloud with complete agreement. The play, in my opinion, was extremely successful for three reasons: the professional execution of stage, concentrated acting and lastly, the balance between humor and meaning.

When I first entered the theater and saw the set, I was a little confused. It seemed the stage was *packed* with beds, tables, sofas etc... Initially, I thought this set would serve as the weakness of the play for the attention will be distributed, rather than being focused in to the main action that’s taking place. However, the Brighton Beach Memoirs backstage crew completely proved me wrong by its excellent lighting transitions. The light transitions were right on time and this quick transition allowed the audience to promptly shift his or her complete attention to the part of the stage the light was focusing on. Even though, the script must have provided a challenge (for the story was taking place all over the house), the backstage crew took this challenge as an opportunity and created a cohesive stage where the story was able to take place without the delay of scene transitions. I thought this was extremely impressive and in the end, served to set the Brighton Beach Memoirs apart from the previous KIS theater productions.

Brighton Beach Memoirs was also unique in that it had a very small group of actors. While this may serve as an advantage, I was also aware that with a small crew, every actor had to “pull it off” during the play. Brighton Beach Memoirs’ actors certainly all “pulled it off.” Each actor adopted its characters and developed his own interpretation including the way the character talks, walks and reacts. This was most evident in scenes where all characters were present, like the scene of the family dinner. During this short scene, each character ate differently, reacted to stories differently and therefore established its uniqueness. For example, the audience could clearly see the contrast between Eugene’s mother who was strong and assertive with her kid, and Nora’s mother who was always submissive and weak when it came to making decisions for her own children. Brighton Beach Memoirs’ actors also showed their strength by making the characters real and relatable. I especially loved the scenes between Eugene and Stanley where I could really *see* them being brothers. The little fights they had, the “educational” sexual learning, the sorrow that took place when separation had to come—these scenes all came together in the end to form the big picture of inseparable brotherhood. Yongmin and Chris didn’t have any “dead time” between their lines and this lack of dead time really made it seem they were talking in real life. The story of the brothers didn’t seem like an “overly” well-rehearsed scene, but instead it seemed they were really talking with each other as *real* brothers. I personally thought this was a great achievement, because after all beauty of acting is making a story come to life.

After watching the play, I was talking with few of classmates and all of them said they loved the play because it was so funny. But now that I look back, I think everyone loved the play because there was a balance between humor and meaning. Brighton Beach Memoirs wasn’t a simple comedy; it was a humorous play that dealt with serious issues including teenager life, family, financial struggle and many more. By the end, when the curtain came down, the audience was able to take home not only the laughter, but also a sense of heartwarming lesson about the importance of family.

While, I can't say that the play was *perfect* for there were areas of improvement that can be made such as slowing down the lines and enunciating the words, overall, the Brighton Beach Memoirs was truly a play that raised the bar up for the forthcoming KIS theater production for it had the three keys for a great play: execution, acting and the balance between humor and meaning.